



The Old Ironsides Report

26 June 2003

Iraqi national team begins comeback by clobbering 1 AD 11-0

Story and Photos by Sgt. Mark Bell, 372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq – The former Iraqi national soccer team waxed a team from the 1st Armored Division 11-0 during a match held at the Baghdad Olympic Stadium Tuesday.

For a brief five-minute period, the U.S. offense looked like it could stun a better-trained Iraqi team.

For five minutes, the large American crowd cheered for the American success of keeping the ball past the midfield mark.

Six minutes into the game American defense soon collapsed, and so began the lopsided smashing of the ambitious young American team.

The Iraq's first of 28 shots on goal came from a two-player assault against the defense of the Americans. Smashing a long 15-meter goal from the side-lines, the crowd quickly changed it's vote of heroes as sounds of "Lets go Iraq!" could be heard coming from the large desert-camouflaged uniformed crowd.

With every consequential goal in the first half, the crowd became louder and more excited to every upcoming goal from the Iraqi team.

At the half, the American team was not only unable to score, but could not get a single shot towards the goal.

"We are kind of taking an easy on them in the first half," said Chief Warrant Officer Carlton Hart, 42, from 354th Civil Affairs Battalion. "Actually they are pretty good and have good ball movement, team work and can tell they've been playing together for sometime."

During the second half, the American team approached the play with more confidence and hopes to regain lost ground and avoid a possible shutout.

"We need to work a little bit on the defense and go out there and have fun," Hart, who grew up playing soccer in Baltimore, said at halftime.

Within minutes, and seemingly toying with the American team, the Iraqi team was able to launch more balls past the American goalie, who spent more time fishing the ball out of the large net, than actually stopping any Iraqis from scoring.

In the end, the American team left defeated and unable to get a single shot near the net, but more important they were able to make friends, competitors and a common interest – a love for a game that bridges across continents and hearts.

"Sports have always been the means of bringing together folks of all ages. There is no difference," Hart said.

For once, the Iraqi team played a game for the game and not for a dictator.

"During Saddam, we were warned we had to win or we'd be punished," said Ghayith Abdul Ghanee, 26, an



Old Ironsides Division soldiers take on the former Iraqi national soccer team Tuesday. The Iraqi team dominated the game winning 11-0.

Iraqi defender. "The spirit of the game is not like that. Whether you win or lose, it's still just a game."

Although he hopes Iraq could possible compete in the next Olympics, Ghanee said being able to play in a free country is good enough for him.

"We are ambitious and we are dreaming here," he said. "We hope in the long-term we will be more advanced and maybe go to the Olympics, but for now this is fun and exciting."

To outsiders, the game could be just the game, but according to Don Eberly, the Senior Minister of Youth and Sports Ministry, this is anything but a game – a new chapter in Iraq's history books.

Eberly said Iraqi teams are coming together and retraining. Federations are reorganizing and electing new officials.

"Iraqis, in particular, take there sports very serious," said Eberly. "Unfortunately, in the 1990's the entire program, from amateur to Olympic level, disintegrated under the influence of Saddam, who abused the programs and athletes. But, all along the spirit was alive."

"This sporting event is important because it symbolized a new cooperation between the Army and local athletic community," he said.

"This competition is happening because of the swift, effective responsiveness of the Army. We got right up on it because of the Army."

In the end, it was a laughing Sgt. Maj. J.B. Anderson, 1st Brigade operations sergeant major and an Iraqi spectator holding up a sign reminding the exhausted crowd the score: 0-11.

NEWS

British Demand Surrender of Iraqi Gunmen

MAJAR AL-KABIR, Iraq (AP) - British forces gave civilian leaders in this town 48 hours to hand over gunmen who killed six military policemen after a violent demonstration that left four Iraqi civilians dead. The ultimatum came a day after Iraqi gunmen - enraged by the deaths of their countrymen at the hands of British soldiers - killed two British military policemen during the demonstration and then stormed a police station, killing four more.

Hamas, Islamic Jihad OK Truce With Israel

JERUSALEM (AP) - Islamic militant groups signed an agreement to halt attacks on Israelis for three months, a senior official of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction said Wednesday - a possible breakthrough for the U.S.-backed peace plan. An official with one of the groups, however, said the deal was not final. Shortly after word of the cease-fire, Israel sent helicopters to carry out an airstrike against what it said was a squad of Hamas militants preparing to carry out a rocket attack. Palestinian officials said a man and a woman were killed and 17 Palestinians were wounded.

N.M. Wildfire Forces Hundreds From Homes

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) - A wildfire that leapt the Rio Grande forced about 1,000 people - including the mayor's family - to temporarily evacuate their homes and prompted the governor to declare a state of emergency. The blaze burned through 700 acres of brush along the river, causing a power outage that left 16,000 homes and businesses in the dark.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

Men will find that they can prepare with mutual aid far more easily what they need and avoid far more easily the perils which beset them on all sides, by united forces.

--Baruch Spinoza

Three travelers stopped in a small town on their way to the city. They had no food or money. They knocked on doors asking for food, but the people were poor, with little to eat and nothing to spare.

Cheerfully, they returned to their camp and built a fire. "What are you doing?" asked a bystander, "Building a fire with nothing to cook?" "But we do have something to cook!" they said. "Our favorite dish, stone soup. We only need a pot."

"I think I can find one," said one of the bystanders. When she returned, the travelers filled the pot with water and placed two large stones in it. "This will be the finest soup we've ever made!" said the first traveler. "I agree," said the second, "but don't you think it would taste better with a cabbage in it?" "I think I can find one," said another bystander. By evening, they had a hearty feast, which they shared with the townspeople.

What can we do with help today, that we couldn't do alone?

BUSINESS

Fed Cuts Rates Quarter-Point to 1958 Lows

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Federal Reserve on Wednesday cut U.S. interest rates a quarter percentage point to 1958 lows and suggested it stood ready to take more action if the risk of falling prices worsened.

The central bank's rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee trimmed the bellwether federal funds rate for overnight loans between banks to 1 percent, the 13th rate reduction since early 2001 in a campaign aimed at nursing the economy through a recession and back to vigorous health.

SPORTS

McCain wants USOC changes by August

By Vicki Michaelis, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Aiming for a speedy restructuring of the U.S. Olympic Committee, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., on Tuesday told external and internal reform panels to meet soon to iron out their few differences and to figure out how to comply with international Olympic guidelines.

The directive underlines McCain's desire to fix the USOC quickly and gives the USOC much more of a voice in its transformation. In January senators verbally lashed the USOC for ethical missteps, mismanagement and political infighting.

And in other news:

Eminem Dangles Doll in Jackson Imitation

LONDON (AP) - The real Slim Shady stood up and made fun of Michael Jackson by dangling a baby doll over a hotel balcony.

Rapper Eminem also wore a surgical mask over his face Tuesday in an obvious swipe at Jackson, who dangled his baby, Prince Michael II, over a balcony railing in Berlin in November.



Last year, 87% of companies had casual dress days, according to a Society for Human Resource Management Poll.

TODAY'S WEATHER

High: 108F/42C

Low: 81F/27C

